



Photo: PF de Vos, Jr.

Photo: PF de Vos, Jr.

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the wrong place at the wrong time

inner city man injured in police "take-down"

Ravi Sharma has more in common with Ronald Mah than he ever hoped to have. On April 4, 2001, both men were involved with the Edmonton City Police Tactical Unit. Mah was wanted in connection with armed robberies in Edmonton and Calgary and a hostage-taking incident at a Mill Woods Restaurant. He was arrested that evening at a house near 157 Avenue and Beaumaris Road. Sharma was an innocent bystander in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was taken to a medical clinic with a black eye, a lacerated face, a fractured jaw and three damaged teeth.

Sharma, 40, lives a quiet life in Edmonton's inner city. At about 6:30 p.m. on April 4, he was on his way to the Taipan Cafe at the corner of 106A Avenue and 97th Street for a bowl of soup when a woman in a car called him over. She had the passenger window rolled down. He walked over to the car. As he was talking to the woman, he heard a voice say, "Get down, this is a police take down."

Sharma jumped into the car and told the woman to get down. A bullet fired at the car shattered both the driver's side window and the front passenger window.

"I was taken out of the car and beaten," he said, "The last thing I remember is that I was hit on the head. It still seems unreal, like something that happens in the movies or on TV. I've lived in the inner city for years, and nobody has ever assaulted me."

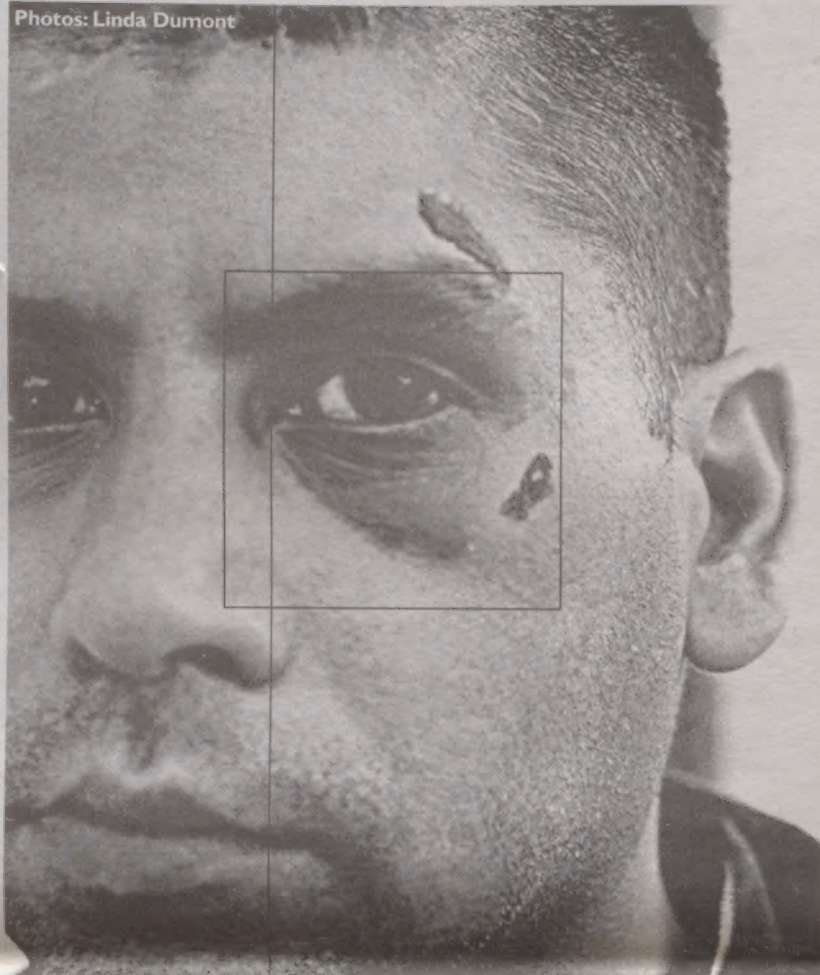
Shante Len, manager of the Taipan Cafe, located across the street from where the take-down took place, said she looked out of the window when she heard a loud "bang". She saw the street was blocked.

In her witness statement she wrote, "I saw Ravi Sharma sitting on the curb with hands cuffed and one police officer standing over him and pushing him down as he tried to stand up... I saw one police officer with a face cover (mask) holding a gun toward the front of the car and the windows on both sides completely shattered. I saw the police take Ravi's handcuffs and then he covered his face with both hands... There were many police officers around them. I thought they were undercover police officers or reporters. Then I saw the lady getting into a police car and Ravi getting into an ambulance."

Paul Dean, a former roommate of Sharma's, was on his way home from work when he came upon the scene. "I saw Ravi sitting on the curb and the police were questioning him. He looked really shaken. The police were in high gear. There were police swarming around with assault rifles, the whole nine yards."

Dean said he wasn't allowed to speak to Sharma, but he hung around until the ambulance >> nextPg

Photos: Linda Dumont



A bullet fired at the car shattered both the driver's side window and the front passenger window.

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he had x-rays taken which revealed a fractured jaw, and three damaged teeth.

:: attendants took care of him, and the woman was taken away in handcuffs.

Sharma was sent to the Northeast Medical Clinic. His medical report said he was "involved in an altercation with the city police during a take-down. Patient has large laceration to under chin and abrasion to left eyebrow."

From the clinic, Sharma called Judy Brown, a friend of ten years, to tell her what had happened. Brown said, "He asked me if I would like to speak to the police officer who said Ravi had been in the way and would probably need a few stitches."

From the clinic, Sharma was sent home by cab, but asked the cab driver to take him to the Royal Alexandra Hospital instead. There he had x-rays taken which revealed a fractured jaw, and three damaged teeth.

The next morning, Sharma stopped to look at the blood on the sidewalk outside the Chinese Bakery, then went to the Taipan Cafe where he saw Len. He said the events of the previous night still seemed unreal. "I asked her, who beat me up?" She started laughing and said, "The police, who else?" I still did not believe it."

Len showed Ravi a newspaper clipping with one line that applied to him. The Edmonton Journal's story on Mah's arrest entitled "Armed Robbery Suspect Nabbed" said: "Police looking for Mah thought they had tracked him down earlier Wednesday evening at 97th Street and 106A Avenue."

"Do I look like Mah?" he asked. "I'm East Indian and he's white."

Wes Bellmore from the Media Relations Department of the Edmonton City Police said: "We know that Ravi Sharma was involved during a high risk vehicle stop on 97th Street. It was a person who was suspected of taking Mah a weapon. Sharma intervened right in the middle of a high-risk vehicle take-down. He was a bystander."

Bellmore said that at this point there are some unanswered questions but "If Sharma comes forward and puts in a complaint it will certainly be investigated by internal review because the tactical team was involved."

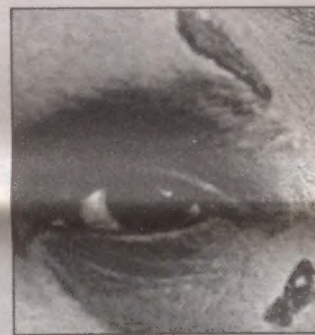
Sharma said he had already filed a citizen's complaint, but, since it apparently had not yet been looked at, he filed another complaint on Wednesday, April 11.

Sharma's Lawyer, Hans Reisch, said: "We don't know yet who committed the violence. The police may not want to incriminate themselves. It may take quite awhile to get to the bottom of this, but the police may be more co-operative after awhile. In a half a year they will be willing to admit they made a mistake. They may have thought he was the guy who committed the crime or was part of the group."

Sharma is still traumatized by the violence, and said at times he feels suicidal. Just the sight of a police car scares him.

Ravi is looking for more witnesses. Anyone who was at the scene on April 4 can call Hans Reisch at 424-7732 or Our Voice writer, Linda Dumont, at 428-0605.

LINDA DUMONT



sfi rates



appeal to health care + education professionals + their leaders

pre-election

"SFI rates are the single, biggest concern our department is facing. We have been lobbied strenuously by agencies throughout the province. We hear the stories from our constituents. It is an issue that is definitely rising on the radar screen.

There is no need for anyone to live in abject poverty in Alberta. There are families out there who need help and that is in process and being discussed."

We are looking at emergency measures to get us through until April 1st, when the next logical change to SFI rates would occur."

Clint Dunford, Minister of Human Resources, Our Voice, February, 2001

post-election

"If the question is are we increasing welfare rates in the (April 24) budget, the answer is no."

Clint Dunford, Edmonton Journal, April 10, 2001

>>attention

Heather Smith, President, United Nurses of Alberta
Dr. Steed, President, Alberta Medical Association
Larry Booi, President, Alberta Teachers Association

Over the past few months the provincial government has made decisions that address the inadequate pay of you as professionals. We congratulate you on your prosperity.

We also appeal to you, as fellow citizens, to remember us. We are the poor who struggle on the fixed incomes of SFI and AISH, or work for minimum wage. We are your patients; our children are in your classrooms; we are your neighbors and friends. When you buy a coffee, we serve you; when you donate food to the food bank, we pick it up. We clothe our children and furnish our homes with your kindness. We are thankful for these things, but there also exists in us a small hope that we will be afforded the dignity of an income we can live on.

We are appalled that the recent throne speech made no mention of us. We are frightened at the prospect of a provincial budget that ignores us and our struggles.

In the atmosphere of celebration that surrounds the

sharing of this province's wealth, in the midst of the relief that worst is over in Alberta, we ask that you think and act on behalf of us for whom the worst is not over, for whom no relief is in sight.

We ask that you add your voice to ours in a clear and consistent demand for justice and relief from poverty from the political leaders of this province.

The approximately 20% increase in wages that you will enjoy must be applied to SFI, AISH and the minimum wage.

Please speak in solidarity with us. Unfortunately, Our Voice alone is not loud enough to be heard.

NATASHA LAURENCE
Managing Editor
Our Voice

This appeal was e-mailed two weeks before publication to those named at the top of the letter. No response has been received as of yet. In light of the lack of response from the leadership of these organizations, we ask that the members of these groups contact Clint Dunford directly to express their support.

letters to the editor

peter verin's 21 yrs



Letters to the Editor can be mailed to:

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I was passing through Edmonton a week ago and picked up a copy of "Our Voice" newspaper from one of the street vendors. I salute the people who put out this magazine and sell it, and I read with interest the item about Peter Verin and his relationship with the University of Victoria on page 4. BUT, as there are always two sides to every story I would like to hear from you, Mr. Turpin (President, University of Victoria). The article by James Rowe states that Mr. Verin 'has lived on the University of Victoria Campus for 21 years' so my first

reaction is "where?" "How?" That sounds an awfully long time for someone described as "homeless." The article makes reference to the fact that 'Peter is an ardent environmentalist' and no one can argue with that. But it begs another question: what were the ways that Mr. Verin demonstrated his zeal for the environment? Mr. Rowe reports that after 21 'relatively peaceful' years, Mr. Verrin has been asked to go. I have a sense that there is more here than Mr. Rowe is giving us. Perhaps the clue is in the use of the word 'relative-

ly'? I am including "Our Voice" on the address list and shall be glad to hear why they call the University "insensitive" after giving Mr. Verin something that sounds like a home for 21 years. I think that "Our Voice" will achieve its editorial ends better if it gives its readers the whole truth. Until I know more there is no way that I can respond by adverse criticism of the administration of the University of Victoria in this matter.

ALAN NUNN

< attention >

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flotsam jetsam +

>> dialectics of containment + mass mediations of protest

The mainstream media's coverage of protests from Seattle, Prague, Davos, to Quebec City have had three damning effects:

1 Descriptions of largely peaceful demonstrations as 'riots' and 'violent' have effectively contained protestors and their message. The general non-protesting public knows violence is opposite to virtuous pursuits of the Good, True and Beautiful and thus understand demonstrators (whether grannies, anarchists, or 'Black Shaws') as ignorant and brutish unprogressives. The media quarantines dissent on the margins of popular imagination making wider circulations of resistive praxis improbable - Violent™ stymies the growth and transgressive potential of the movement

2 This branding deadens the messages conveyed by direct action, reinforces the normalcy of non-resistance living, and dissuades the general public from skewering the scatologies of suburbia, hitting the streets, or at least questioning the righteousness of privilege.

3 Violent™ legitimizes the state's increasingly organized and violent response to direct action protest. The mass media helps the general public understand how police violence is a necessary response to the brutishness of unprogressive protests. With legitimacy proffered by the press, police forces make demonstrating physically, economically, and socially dangerous. Arrest and chemicals dissuade the committed and potentially committed from engaging in resistance.

The direct-action blocs of the global movement for radical social change are impassed. To mitigate the containment effected by present mass mediations of protest, the movement must gain a new PR savvy. This means, I think, developing a better understanding of the dialectics of containment - how the movement becomes 'Them' to the mainstream's 'Us'. Dress codes for Demos are deliciously dumb-assed, but there needs to be more discussion on strategy and techniques that jam media's attempts to contain the movement as a violent and unprogressive fringe. There are limits to humor, but more creative and hysterical resistances are required. We must protest ironically enough for 'Them' to take 'Us' seriously.

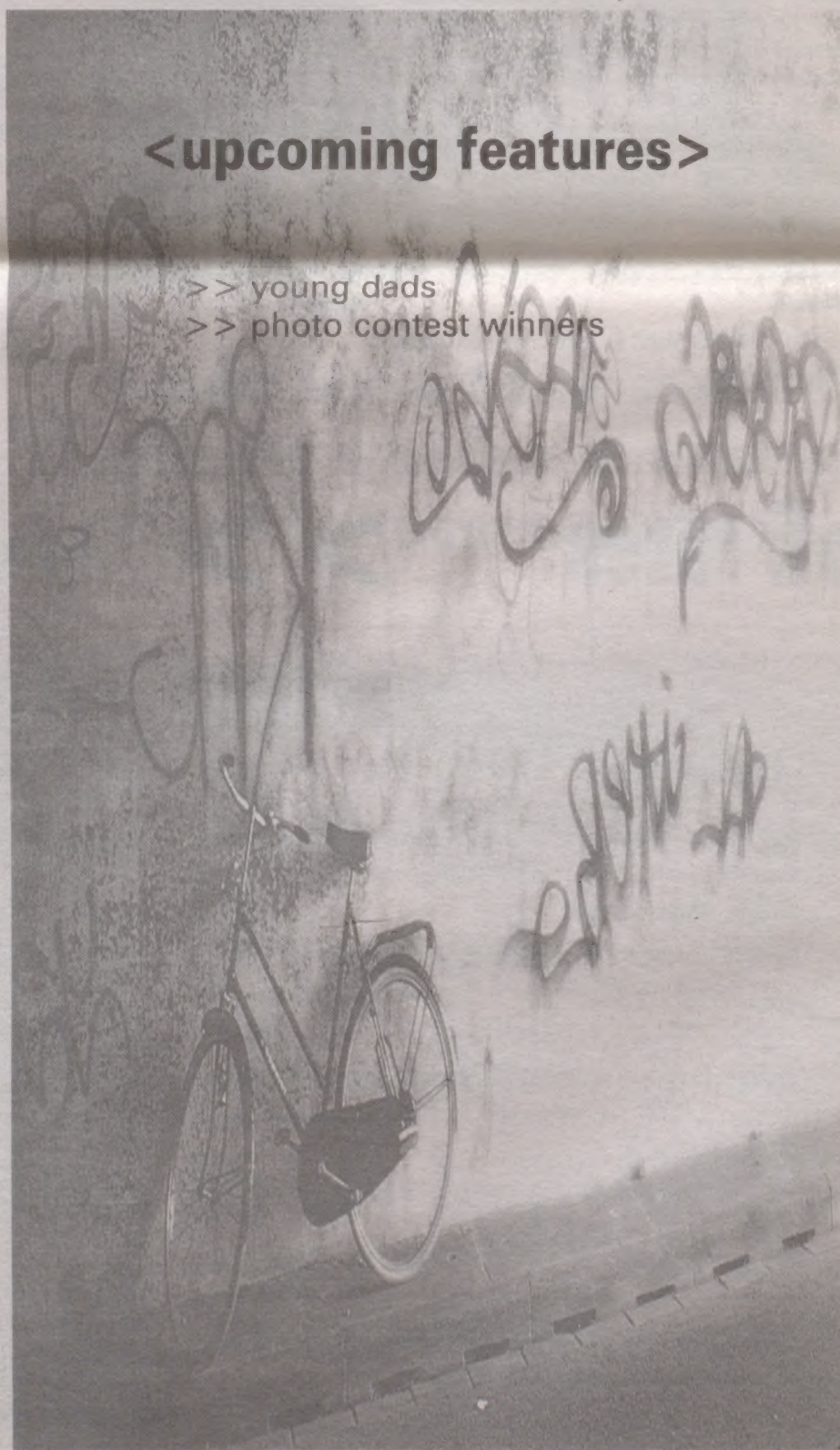
>> salvation at starbucks

Reverend Billy Talen will save your money and your soul - money back guaranteed! Dressed as a Pentecostal preacher in a white dinner jacket, Bill Talen may be North America's most charismatic social jinx. A performance artist and producer of commercial nightmares for multinational corporations, the 51-year-old New Yorker travels the streets and chain stores of North America preaching the sin of consumerism to ardent followers of the Starbucks regime. By invading the personal space of casual coffee drinkers, the performances deliver their underlying message: Starbucks is invading your right to think creatively as human beings. "My performances" writes Reverend Billy "are non-religious. They're about entertaining civil disobedience. Disobedience is change...My work is a parody, I make fun of established belief so that I can address the real belief we should be cultivating: What is fact? Testify @ www.revilly.com

JAMES ROWE

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- >> young dads
- >> photo contest winners



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community? what community? ■ ■

What really matters? Safe attractive parking for cars belonging to Government of Alberta employees at the Remand Centre and Brownlee Building and the police station? Or a healthy community where land is used in ways that improve quality of life for people living in the area?

A proposal is going forward to create a 480 vehicle fenced and security-patrolled parking lot between 96 and 97th Streets, between 105A Avenue and the old railway line. There will be a public meeting on May 9th at 7 PM at Bissell Centre when details of the plan will be presented.

Again, people of a part of the city who already have many issues other communities do not have to face are being challenged to take on City Hall. And in this case, it's also taking on the provincial government. That is even tougher because, as a senior level of government, it can do pretty much what it wants with land use and the City cannot prevent it. This is the same part of the city where schools are being closed so more children and parents will be having to travel more as they move between homes and schools. It is a neighbourhood where few people can afford to go away somewhere nice and green for a vacation, but that has a great shortage of parks.

What will be lost if this block of land with the equivalent of about 20 lots, currently just dirt and weeds, becomes a parking lot? The Boyle Street-McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan was completed in 1994 after a careful process of community consultation. In that plan the area was zoned for comprehensive mixed use that was intended to definitely include housing. Other uses for the land were: retail stores, health services, restaurants, child care and private clubs.

Or what about a bigger park than the current Mary Burle Park on 97th Street? This area is already used informally by many people as a place to relax or gain visual access to people in the Remand Centre.

A main entrance to the parking lot will be on 96th Street immediately south of the liquor store. This area has a more relaxed approach to pedestrian traffic than some parts of the city and a very high volume of pedestrian traffic because few residents can afford vehicles. The statistics show there are already too many vehicle-pedestrian accidents in the area. With a few hundred more vehicles turning in and out of the lot each day the danger of injury and death will only increase.

When the proposal was first mentioned, there was talk about making the external appearance of the lot as attractive as possible, but it now seems more likely there will just be a high security chain link fence right along the sidewalk. To provide a ribbon of grass between the sidewalk and the fence with some benches and flower beds is to ask too much—even though there will be improvements INSIDE the lot to make it more pleasant for those who park there. There is also a plan to provide a pedestrian pathway along the south side of the lot but nothing is known about whether it would be wide enough to include grass and other improvements, or just be an asphalt roadway.

To turn the block into a parking lot will require the approval of City Council to amend the ARP. Can anything be done? The only way to find out is for everyone who believes a community is more than pavement to attend the public meeting and the Council meeting and voice an opinion. Maybe some who speak up will make the case for having a different use of the land than a parking lot. Others



may say they can live with a parking lot but describe some things they would like done that would make such a development more acceptable.

Why not charge those who will benefit from parking in the area a little more (after all, they could take the bus or a bicycle to work and the parking wouldn't even be needed) and develop the block south of the buildings, along 103A Avenue and east of the Army and Navy as a multilevel parkade instead? That whole block is already a parking zone and would not intrude into new territory that could still be reclaimed for good human uses.

The City Council members for the area involved are Michael Phair and Jim Taylor. Urging them to do what they can may be a useful idea too. Ty Lund is the Minister of Infrastructure for the Alberta Government that is proposing the development. He should know how this plan will affect the lives of community residents. And Brian Mason is the MLA for the area.

JIM GURNETT

S F I will the REAL rates barrier please stand up! ■ ■

The argument Clint Dunford, Minister of Human Resources and Development, consistently gives for not raising SFI rates is "we don't want to set up barriers to the movement through the system." The underlying assumption is that people don't want to work, don't want to be independent and if you allow them, will take advantage of you at every turn. You have to make their lives so miserable and impossible that they will leave, hopefully never to return.

This underlying assumption is false, but no doubt shared by many Albertans and has allowed the continued abuse and abandonment of people in need in Alberta.

Ironically it is also this underlying assumption that has created the real barrier to moving through the system.

A person entering the SFI program in it's current state could be compared to a man being sent on a cross-country journey over rough terrain. To prepare him, his shoes are taken from him and a hundred pound pack is placed on his back. He is given food enough for half a day when it will take at least a week to reach his destination. If he falls, it's his fault. If he expresses frustration and anger, he's non-compliant. If he gives up in despair, he has proven the point, he was lazy to begin with.

You cannot live on the current SFI rates, not because you're stupid, lazy or irresponsible, but

because it isn't possible. Those of us who have moved through the system know that if it wasn't for outside help - family support, food bank assistance, agency assistance, kind neighbours or helpful friends, we never would have made it. We also know that the whole time we were "moving through the system" the system was working against us.

Let's say you're a married man supporting a wife and two small children. You lose your job and have no EI benefits. You apply for SFI. Two things happen. Both you and your wife are told you have to enter job search programs. You will get no assistance with childcare until you are working, and you're issued a cheque that, because of pre-set shelter allowances, only covers half your rent. When you take the second half of your rent from the remainder to keep a roof over your head, what you have left goes to utilities and, maybe food. But you still have to find child-care and transportation to job search for you and your wife.

There are no options. You might ask the reasonable question, "Can my wife continue to care for our children while I look for work." But the answer is no. If you want our help, you will do it our way.

If the situation continues, and you still haven't found work, you might think you should move to a cheaper place, but you have no money for a

damage deposit. If you can't pay your rent, you will be evicted and become part of the hidden homeless, sleeping on the couches of family and friends.

What is the real barrier to moving through the system?

Lets say you are a single mother with two children who took out a student loan to compete a Business Admin course. You're trained and ready to work, but you're not hired as soon as you thought you would be. You apply for SFI. You're assigned to a job search program on the other side of the city, told there is no daycare subsidy until you are working and issued a cheque that covers half your expenses.

What is the real barrier to moving through the system?

These are not hypothetical situations. They are the stories of people in real situations. The SFI system as it now stands is formula for despair, family violence and child neglect. And it is allowed because too many people in this province believe the underlying assumption that allows Clint Dunford to get away with saying, "We don't want to set up barriers..."

It is completely possible in Alberta to have a system that actually supports people toward independence, but it would have to involve real support. What we have now is a cruel joke.

Over the next month, while the budget is being debated in the Legislature, we need to strongly remind our elected representatives that we care what happens to our fellow citizens, that we want to see an increase in SFI rates, and some critical thinking about how the SFI system operates.

NATASHA LAURENCE



good ol' alberta racism

>> overheard

Every Saturday I walk to the local donut shop to drink coffee, read the paper and think important thoughts. I sit quietly in the corner, almost invisible in my cloud of smoke and abstraction. I do not mean to eavesdrop. Most conversations are way over my head anyway, but sometimes I get drawn in by certain sentences, certain tones of voice.

Like the ones I heard this past Saturday, concerning the Royal Alex Emergency:

"It's always full of natives. And you know what they're like. They go even if they don't need it."

"I know what you mean, the last time I was there that's all there was. They just go for the drugs."

"It makes me so angry. They should build a place for them, the Department of Indian Affairs."

They're always giving them money. Why don't they put it to some use and build them their own clinic or whatever?"

Or the one I heard the Saturday before: "I used to take day-old donuts to the Bissell Centre, but it just made me sick. There's nothing there but natives lying around. I worked hard all my life; why can't they?"

"Then they ask me for money and I say 'Get a job!' I'm not giving them anything."

It was all so matter-of-fact, like the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, stated and agreed upon with no questions asked. What do you do with attitudes like that? Do you talk about residential schools and despair? Do you talk about healing and acceptance? Do you talk about the beautiful people you know full of insight and wisdom who happen to be native? Do you trash the place and get arrested on principle?

Do you finish your coffee in silence and walk home depressed?

Never one to make a scene I chose the least and last option, but it nags at me. I wonder how many donut shops, truck stops and kitchen tables all over Alberta are served with the same grassroots wisdom. I wonder how many bus drivers, doctors, teachers and store clerks go to work with these same thoughts running through their heads. And when they meet an aboriginal person what do they do? Do they hide their contempt behind false smiles or not bother to conceal it?

And if you happen to be Aboriginal, how does facing that attitude day after day wear at your soul? Do you start to believe it? Do you become angry, join a gang, beat someone up or drink yourself into oblivion?

So many questions; so few answers.

NATASHA LAURANCE



commentary



Photo: PF de Vos, Jr.

>> the peanut man

Tansi, bothers and sisters. What a beautiful day to be alive. Thank you, Creator! Me, I've been on my earth walk for 54 summers and during my journey I've been touched by many ugly things, one of them being racism. This ugliness appeared to me even before I had entered grade school. This is my "peanut-man" story:

I was six years old. Imagine my surprise one day to see a tractor pulling a wagon, coming down our dusty road, and on the wagon was a live peanut. A man dressed up like that peanut on the bag of Planter's peanuts. And "Holy!" he was throwing bags of peanuts to all the white kids running beside him. It was only natural that I should get as close to the wagon as possible to get my share.

"Whap!" My head exploded. Seconds later I realized I'd been hit on the head with the peanut man's cane. Even though my head was bleeding, I thought if I cried I was out of the game. I made sure no one saw me cry, but cry I did, for two reasons: one, my head hurt and, two, I got no peanuts. Just wait till next time. I won't get hit, and I'll get my bag of peanuts.

I didn't have to wait for long. Here he was again. Only this time to add to the magic, there was music. Don't get hit and if I did, don't cry. That's part of the game. Crying wasn't allowed. Bobbing and weaving, I dodged that cane; my reward a bag or two of peanuts. What a treat! That's how the summer of '52 went for me, chasing the peanut man down that dusty road, trying not to get tagged with his cane. If I succeeded I was able to munch down my trophy, a bag of peanuts.

I was in my early twenties and looking back before I realized that it wasn't a game. The peanut man really meant to hurt me, because I was native. Wherever you are, physical or spiritual world, Mr. Peanut Man, I forgive you. You would be welcome to my council fires anytime. You did the best you could with what you had. You are in my prayers.

I had never shared this story with anyone until I met two new friends, my co-workers Natasha and Pieter. To you two, I say, "Bless your hearts, you helped me re-live this painful episode of my childhood and put it away. Thank-you, Hi-Hi."

If for whatever reasons our Creator should bring us together, please don't offer me peanuts, I might start bobbing and weaving, and doing all sorts of strange things. Thanks, but no thanks. For some reason, me and peanuts don't get along!

In Spirit
All my relations

SPIRIT KEEPER (MIKE SMITH)

>> the old attitudes

I have been sober now for 5 months and I still have the old attitudes towards the other race at times. I want to blame them for all the wrong things they did to me. Then I realized that most of troubles came from me and I put myself in most of those situations. There are times when I have to stop and wonder what goes through some people's minds. I remember once when I was going home and I had to go in this back alley and there was a woman ahead of me. She turned around and she took one look at me and run off like she was on fire. This really made me think of how people see me and why they are so scared of natives. I had to ask a few people and they gave me a few answers. I still wasn't satisfied and I felt that it's up to me to put people's minds at ease. I know it is not going to be easy and there are going to be people whose attitudes aren't going to change. I have to be more open-minded towards others and not react to every little thing that happens to me.

Being native and sober isn't the easiest. I still get followed when I go into stores (I just take them on a wild goose chase). Even when I am selling papers there are people who won't even give me money because they think I am going to use it for drinking. I don't drink because I want to set an example and be a role model to all people, no matter what color they are. There are times where I say to myself maybe it is better to be drunk and show these people what they want to see.

Then I realize I am just feeling sorry for myself. It doesn't just happen to me, it happens to people who aren't native. I have seen where they won't even look at a person because he was dressed different or talked funny. There is a guy who I know, the nicest guy you could ever meet. I have seen people walk away when he was near. They didn't want anything to do with him. He's the most gentle man I've ever met. He taught me to accept people no matter what color they are or how they treat you. His spirit is so strong. I wish I could be as accepting of others as he is.

I have also learned that there are people who accept you no matter what. But there are some who won't

change no matter what I do. Those are the ones I stay away from. Some times avoidance is the only thing that keeps me out of trouble.

I didn't know that people treated you different because of the color of my skin. I never experienced racism until I went to a white school and I was the only native in my class. Being the only native had its benefits and I made sure to take advantage of it. When they wanted someone to show them how to skin a deer I could show them. The reason why was because I grew up in that life and I learned this from my uncle. The only disadvantage I had was getting on teams for sports or getting invited to social functions. The one attitude I took on was never trust these people because they would screw you matter what. I got the highest marks and never missed a day of school. The teachers treated me different because they thought I wouldn't understand what they were teaching. I knew they were wrong and I got into a lot of trouble because I spoke my mind. I have seen a lot of native students get expelled for little minor incidents and the white students get nothing for the same thing. I know I might sound like a whiner but some times we get treated like shit! I have been treated bad and I know that I have seen many wrongs done to my people. I have been stopped by the police for walking and taken to a back alley to be beaten and humiliated. I have been called a dirty drunken Indian when I know that I am not a drunk. I am proud sober native and I will fight the bad spirits that try to drive me back to drinking. I will keep speaking out against racism towards people no matter what their color or background. I now know that everyone will not change at a wave of magic wand. It requires a willingness to learn more about my people.

LEN BLACKFOX MARTIAL



< < = = =

the journey of clayton giles

legal kids

While you were reading this sentence, somewhere a child committed suicide.

While you were reading this sentence, three children OD'd on drugs.

And while you were reading this sentence, seven young offenders were incarcerated, four babies were born to teen mothers, eleven children started smoking, three children dropped out of school, and six children were violently attacked.

Most of these kids have one thing in common: they are children of divorce and of divorce court. Legal kids.

Opening words of Clayton's web page www.legalkids.com

Clayton Giles, the Calgary teen who, on January 1, 2001, embarked on a 19 day hunger strike to protest his treatment at the hands of the legal system and his mother, has a whole new plan: "On April 28, 2001, I will start a 'Journey for Kids'. I will walk and bike to our nation's capital, Ottawa, and then continue on to Washington, DC. Along the way I will col-

lect signatures from kids and parents who support shared parenting - the right of children of divorce to have equal input from, and equal access to, both parents - and the right of children to have a voice in any proceedings that affect their access to either parent. I hope to present these signatures to Prime Minister Jean Chretien, and President George W. Bush."

Giles was four when his parents divorced and his mother was granted custody. His father, Eric Giles, moved to British Columbia for a year, but returned because he missed his children.

It did not take long for Clayton and his sister, Lindsay, to become pawns in the "industry of divorce."

According to Giles, his mother used her children to manipulate her ex-husband. "It was quite clear to me, even at that young age [five], that she was using us to get back at him for leaving her."

Their father cared for Clayton and his sister during the day. In February 1993, their mother claimed she was harassed, and applied for sole custody. Clayton's father was granted limited visitation rights, and the children were placed in daycare. During this time, Clayton continually asked his mother to see both of his parents "on a week on, week off basis."

His mother refused and the petty manipulations continued. At one visit, Giles recalls his mother not letting him out of the house when his father arrived: "Dad stood out on the sidewalk and I stood inside the door waiting anxiously. When my mother finally said I could go, she told me why she had not let me out right away. She explained that by the court order, Dad was supposed to pick me up at 5:00 p.m. and he was too early. It was 2 minutes to 5:00."

When Clayton was eight, his mother applied to the court for Eric Giles' access to the children to be stopped. According to Clayton, "she never claimed we were mistreated or that we were compromised in any way by our father", but rather that their father did "not merit access" because she had not been paid court costs that had been awarded to her.

The judge handling the case ruled that Clayton and his sister could not see their father until the court costs were paid. A second judgement ruled that Eric Giles could not petition to see his children for a year from the time of the ruling. Clayton does not mince words over this treatment by the court. "I guess Justice Hart believes that children should be bought and sold"

Clayton was denied access to his father for three years. He calls their legal reunion "the best day of my life." Within two years, Clayton ran away to his father's house and they began to seek a transfer of legal custody to his father.

After many more court appearances and further wrangling with the legal system, with no resolution in sight, Clayton took matters into his

own fourteen-year-old hands. He stated: "I will no longer quietly be victimized by the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta. I have started a hunger strike to bring attention to the court and their systematic abuse of children."

"I'm fourteen years old and no one will pay any attention to my feelings and concerns unless they are embarrassed into doing so."

Throughout his 19 day hunger strike, Clayton kept an on-line journal detailing his experience: "This is pretty scary. I'm not sure if I have the guts to keep this going and I'm also not sure if I can stand up to the people who will want me to stop my strike for their own agenda. What if I am wrong in the way I have interpreted what the court has done with me? I know I was victimized by my mother and the court, but will anyone agree?"

The newspaper op/ed pages had strong views. The Calgary Herald said Giles' protest had the "distinct odour of a childish tantrum," and called into question the "parental skills and wisdom" of his father. The National Post's column suggested that it was really Giles' father who was posting material to the website, and that if his father was acting like a proper adult, he would ban Clayton from using the computer until he resumed eating.

While interviewing Eric Giles, Dan Matheson stated that Clayton, like other children of divorce, should "just deal with it," and commented that "if he's going to starve himself shouldn't he pick something important?"

Clayton Giles remained unintimidated.

"I know I don't know everything about what happened between my parents, and I want to explain something here. I don't want to know my parents' story! I don't care who said what and who did what. It has nothing to do with me. That is between them. Kids don't make judgements based on the truths or lies they hear. We judge people by how they make us feel. My dad makes me feel loved and protected. My mother did not."

Since the strike, Eric Giles has been awarded custody, but Clayton remains dedicated to the cause of children of divorce.

"My goal is to make everyone aware that kids are humans, not property, and that we deserve to be heard at the same time as our parents. This means that what is good for our parents is not automatically good for us. It means that we want a say in what happens to us when our family breaks up. Just because kids can't explain exactly why we want something doesn't mean that we don't know what we want. We want to be happy. What makes us happy is maximum contact with both parents regardless of what those parents think about each other. Is that so complicated?"

REBECCA LIPIATT LONG



on the chopping block > >

>> schools sacrificed

The proposed closure of a number of inner-city schools has shaken up inner-city neighborhoods. At the heart of the closures is the tension between declining enrollment in the inner-city schools and pressure to build new schools in suburban communities. Brian Mason, MLA for Edmonton Highlands, says the government is "forcing the closure of inner-city schools so they will have capital funds for new schools. As a city councillor I fought hard to revitalize inner-city communities. Closing schools will have a negative impact. It will stop the flow of new families."

The province will not fund new schools until existing schools have utilization rates close to 85%. Edmonton school boards are proposing to close some inner city schools to increase utilization rates in the schools that are left so that the province can build new schools in the suburbs.

David Lambert, who is actively opposed to urban sprawl, said over the past 20 years 40 new school sites have been approved but not yet built. The city has a plan for a new suburban community, Heritage Valley, which requires nine school sites.

Father Jim Holland, pastor of Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples comments, "They always sacrifice the poor. They did it in Jesus' time. Why should they stop now? In the inner-city, schools are a place of safety. Parents trust the

schools. We have to spend money in the early days to stop the problems before they become a problem."

Parents are being told that bigger schools with more programs are in the best interests of their children, but they are saying they prefer smaller, friendlier schools where their children receive personal attention.

The Catholic School Board based its decision on a study called Project FIRST. Parents who participated allege that they were misled as to the intent of the project - they thought they were working on a project to improve their schools; instead the school board is proposing the closure of Sacred Heart, St. Andrew and St. Michael, and the building of a new school on the St. Michael site. They also offered to provide busing free for three years to students from Sacred Heart School who will have to go to the new St. Michael, but Brian Mason dismisses paying for bussing as a "middle-class idea".

"It's good to have it free, but it's not the best solution where kids get up and get themselves off to school."

Victor Tanti, Communications Director for the Edmonton Public School Board, said their decision to close schools is based on low enrollment. A committee of eight principals has been working on the issue of dwindling enrollment and enhancement of programs. As a result of their meetings, Alex Taylor, John A. McDougall, Eastwood and Queen Mary Park schools are targeted for closure.

Pat Semeniuk, Principal of Alex Taylor School, said closing the schools would be in the best interests of the students if it means better education. She also said that bigger schools could still maintain a "homey atmosphere."

However, Assistant Principal Nancy Weber says: "Parents don't want to see their school closed. They want a community school for their children. Any time you talk about closure, it's a matter of concern for parents."

Both school boards have been holding meetings at the schools and in the communities involved to inform parents of their plans. Parents have been fighting hard to keep their schools open. The impact on inner-city communities if their schools close is another major concern. Residents are not only threatened with the closure of their schools, but with the loss of the parkland areas surrounding them since the city does not have enough money in its budget to buy back all the green space.

Parents pointed out that inner-city schools don't have to be the same as suburban schools. Inner-city kids need a better than level playing field and smaller, friendlier, schools closer to home are in their best interests. The schools are more than just schools; they provide support for the whole family. Many have food banks, clothing banks, daycare, after school care, and even ESL classes for the parents.

LINDA DUMONT

>> a self-interested finish-line

Those of us who have watched the story of school closures unfold across Alberta have been surprised and a little demoralized to see communities pitted against each other: rich against poor, new against old, and school communities against their neighbors. In my neighborhood, Sacred Heart and St. Michael schools are slated for closure with a promise by the board to rebuild on the St. Michael site. There is no mention of what will happen to the playground or the green space at the St. Michael site.

We have been told public consultation has taken place. Many of us who were part of the consultation were not aware that the policymakers had concocted a self-interested finish line. We did not know that there would be no referees to certify the degree of consultation or the quality of the decisions.

Little analysis of the economic, social or educational impact of these closures has been done. The process is incomplete - perhaps significantly incomplete.

School boards face two significant hurdles: funding and the utilization policy of the Klein government. Under the current utilization plan, boards that do not meet the deadline pay a stiff penalty.

We haven't been told how many more inner city schools will have to close to bump Edmonton's overall school utilization rate above 85%, but in 1998 one of the figures bandied about was 44. So who is next on the list?

Alberta Learning has said that school space allotted to outside community groups would be recognized in the utilization

rate, but do school boards actually include these uses in their utilization rates?

I need to know what alternatives to school closures we have. As a parent I need to look at the proposal in a detailed way.

To reach a balanced response to school closures we need the pertinent data - school capacity figures, enrolment, transportation surveys and reports on the condition of the buildings slated for closure. I would like to see demographic projections. I believe it makes no economic sense to close a school where the potential for increased students has not been fully disclosed.

It is an immense task and there is an awful lot to think about. We need time to do that. Eventually we may arrive at school closures, but we will get them the proper way and we'll end up with the right closures.

Closing our school will rip the heart out of McCauley. It will tear the fabric of our community at a time when we as citizens are rejuvenating it. We should not be forced to remake ourselves merely to satisfy a legislative imperative that treats inner-city schools as liabilities.

You are reading this after the April 30 deadline has passed. It may be that despite our attempts, all our knowledge and experience, the deadline has come and gone with school closures the end result. It is an election year for board trustees and they must be held accountable. Do your part and vote for your community.

JAYNE RUSSELL
Concerned parent



"If you close Sacred Heart, very bad for our family and community."

Kong, a South Vietnamese refugee

"I have two kids and a grandson. I have breast cancer and brain disease and am very tired. I like the school. I am concerned my kids won't get the same care in a larger school."

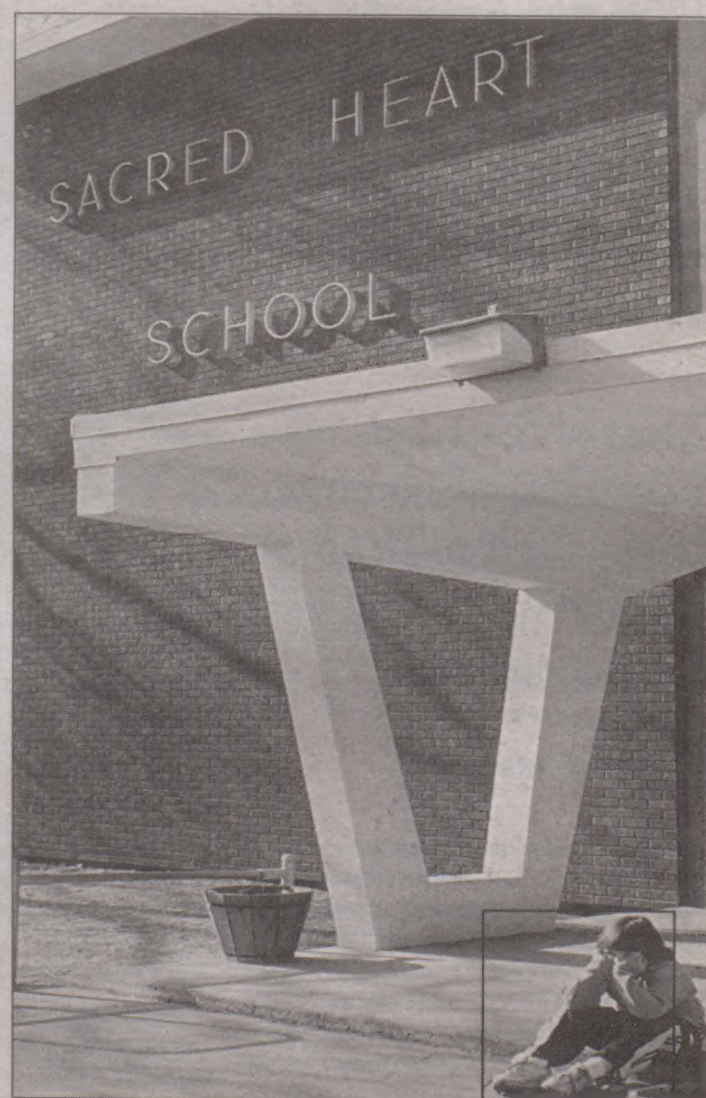
Canlonese woman, through a translator

"My daughter said 'Mom, you go to meeting. No close school.'"

Mah, a Mandarin woman

"My kids were in tears. They said, Please, mommy, stop them closing St. Michael."

Cindy, a mother from St. Michael



dancing with the minotaur

The Quebec City Manifestation has been such an overwhelming experience for me that I can hardly understand or process it yet. I keep thinking of the Magi in T.S. Elliot's, "Journey of the Magi", who on their return ask, "Were we led there for a birth or a death?" And conclude, "I can no longer be at ease with the old dispensation."

There were choices in this demonstration. Anyone who wanted could spend a whole week attending a plethora of seminars denouncing the Corporate Agenda. There was a "Peoples Summit of the Americas," to which very few people who were not representatives of North and South American NGO's could gain access. There was a huge march of 68,000 people that wound its way off into the boonies far away from where delegates were meeting at the FTAA Summit, to listen to more speeches denouncing the Corporate Agenda.

Then there was the Citadel. There was no choice of violent or non-violent demonstrations on the hill. People doing anything, just being on the hill, met tear gas canisters. The fence around the Citadel was not there to keep protestors out, it was a redoubt to give the police a safe refuge from which to fire thousands of tear gas canisters indiscriminately at anyone who, for any reason, came within range. The weekend became a test of personal endurance for each protester. What concentration of gas can I become inured to? How willing am I to go to jail? Will a plastic bullet hit me? How much fear am I prepared to face?

It became a theatre for the expression of personal indomitability and group solidarity. Individuals chose equipment and costumes out of intensely personal understandings of their inner warrior image. We were all warriors up there on the firing line, men and women together. Individuals flaunted personal skills and attitudes. Many of us looked like extras from a Mad Max movie; there were Ninjas; there were GI Joes; there were Star War Troopers. Some of us spoke French, some English, and some Spanish. Some of us lived in the streets; some of us came from affluent homes a continent away. We all sang, "So, So, So, Sol-id-erite!"

Groups marched under black and red banners to the sound of drums made from plastic buckets. Metal pipe was pounded against street signs; chunks of broken concrete were beaten against steel retaining rails. Overhead the beating helicopter rotors and the incessant thump and scream of flying tear gas canisters blended with the sounds of hun-

dreds of human voices raised in chant and song.

Where the gas was thickest there were few voices. Farther back there were screams when the incandescent tear gas canisters were fired into the thickest of the crowds. Individuals used skills learned on playing fields of different sports to grab the streaming containers and fling them back into the police lines or dump them into the nearest sewer grating. One guy with a hockey stick whacked them back under the police feet. Fires were started in the middle of the street with the placards made for the march earlier in the day.

There were casualties. Periodically individuals would lose a seal on their gas masks or goggles and take a snootful or simply encounter a thicker pocket and bend over in agony and wait for the pain to pass. There were rescues. Others would lead them away to pour water over their eyes. My most used piece of first aid equipment was a bag of water-soaked cotton balls to lay on burning eyes.

We danced. I danced. This dance did not come out of my head; it was done for no audience. This dance came from my feet, a hesitant shambling shuffle at first, but body moved to music nevertheless. Then there were muzzle flashes from three places on the green wall that faced me, and the rattle of plastic bullets bouncing on the cobblestones. I prudently retreated behind my little scrap of retaining wall, where I still danced, till the tear gas canister came rolling down the slope to practically land on my feet.

There will be more dancing. At the heart of the Quebec experience is that most ancient of human initiations, the coming of age ordeal. We have been dancing with the Minotaur. We have measured our courage and not found it wanting. Swaying in front of immobile lines of green glassy robots, surging like the tide backward and forward from each barrage of tear gas canisters, we are dancing for our lives, somersaulting over the back of the charging bull of the world.

The signs were clear all the way across the country. We do not appreciate how fortunate we are in the prairies that globalization has not reached anything but the larger centers. Small towns in the west are still havens for the individual, the quirky, and the strange. There are businesses owned by individuals, some with a strange sense of humor, and individual sense of style, who feel absolutely no need to keep up with the times. Cross the border into

Ontario and every town looks like it was just unpacked from a huge Monopoly box. There's a strip mall. There's a Chapters and a Staples and a Tim Horton's and an IGA and an Esso; a whole line up of the same shops, the same architecture and they all look exactly alike in every town across the country. Our group made a hobby of finding every town's "big thing," usually an animal or bird made of plastic.

For me, the vision became clear on the overhead roadways crossing Montreal. Looking down I could see old, shabby, humble St. Henri, my old stomping grounds dwarfed by huge buildings rising to above the height of the overpass that were not there thirty years ago. There are an awful lot more people in Montreal now than there were thirty years ago. There is no more clean air or water or other resources than there were thirty years ago. And all these resources are in the hands of a few people who are willing to turn our country into a huge Monopoly board.

There are going to have to be changes in the way we do things. The demonstration in Quebec will not change the way that the people who meet in places like the Hotel Frontenac think or feel or act. For those of us who danced with the Minotaur things have already changed. We know the enemy; we know the implacable will behind immobile lines of green robots. We know the future of the planet depends upon learning to dance with the Minotaur again. We know we will keep returning again and again to hopelessly unequal combat, with music, with laughter, with personal theater, with joy until we finally reach that secret heart of real love for our fellow humans. The lesson learned by those of us who danced with the Minotaur in Quebec was that caring for each other is the absolutely necessary survival skill of the future, even caring for those sweaty men and women inside those heavy robot uniforms, standing twenty hour shifts in the hot sun. We danced for them, we sang for them, we linked arms and faced them, we cried and vomited when the gas hit us, and we fell and writhed on the ground when the plastic bullets hit us, but we never surrendered to the will behind them. We will be back. We will dance love, caring, creativity, and individuality back into the world again.

THERESA MCBRYAN

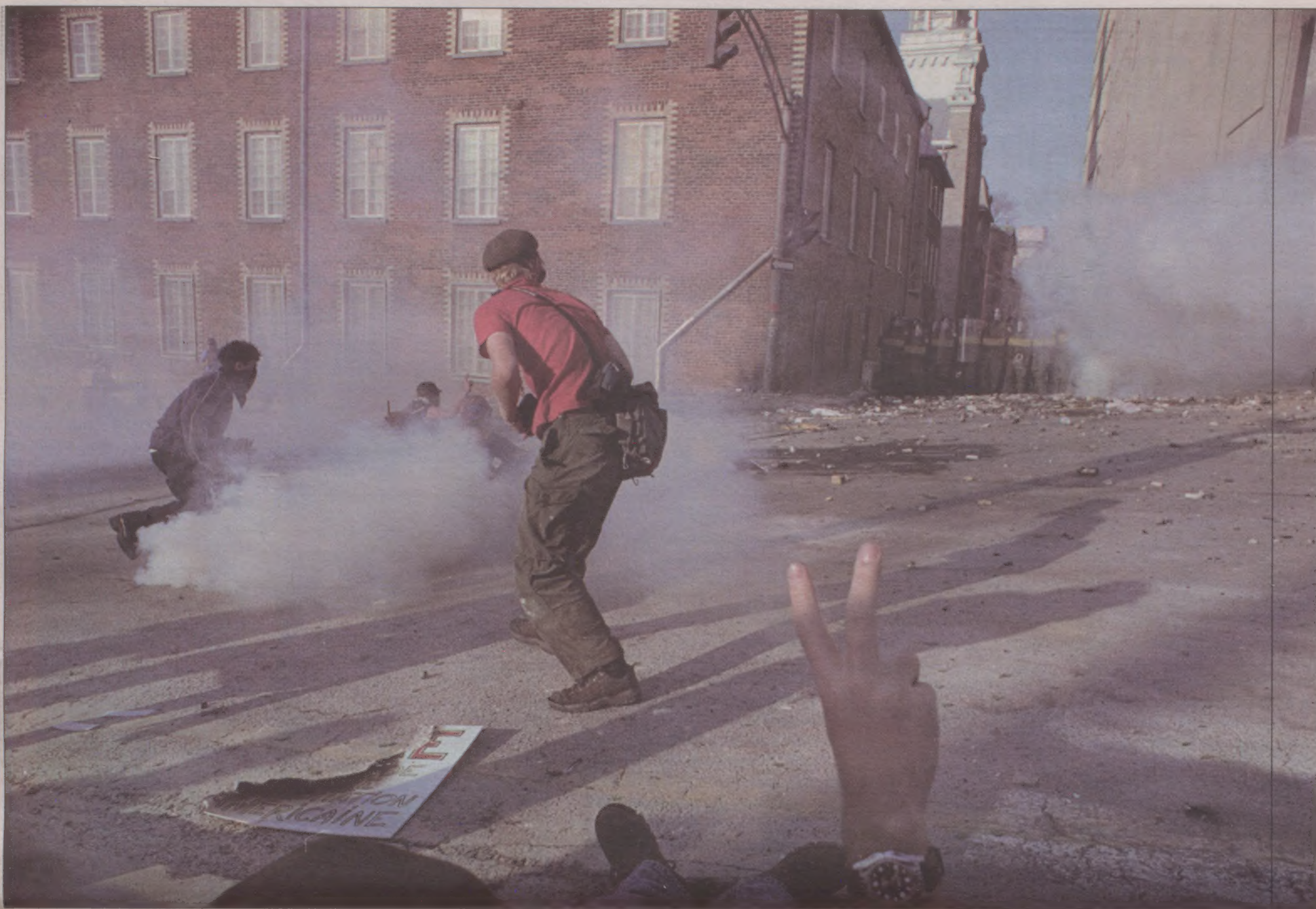
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FTAA Demos Quebec City



Photo: PF de Vos, Jr.

we know the enemy; we know the implacable will behind immobile lines of green robots.



the sound +



the fury



As I peer through the camera lens, I am trying to make sense of the maelstrom of activity around me--trying to understand the juxtaposition of peace and violence. My eyes are burning from the tear gas. Oddly enough, the noxious gas temporarily incapacitates one eye, while the other seems unaffected: peace and violence. One eye sees while the other doesn't.

Around me the air is filled with the incessant drone of police helicopters and the angry drumming of protestors. Periodically, a tear gas canister is lobbed into the crowd, only to be hastily recovered by the demonstrators and tossed back. A juggler strolls past the police line.

The macabre street theatre continues. A black masked protestor throws a chunk of concrete at the police. This is followed by a fusillade of bottles and other debris by his emboldened comrades. A cop buckles as a fist-sized piece of concrete hits him squarely

on the helmet and the crowd rejoices. The cop recovers his balance and the wall of flesh remains intact. The drumming intensifies, inciting the crowd to violence.

Meanwhile, a single protestor kneels in the no-man's-land between the opposing sides. He is unmasked, his flesh vulnerable to both the fumes and the fusillade. His only defence is his upraised arms. I move to document his bravery. Up close, I realise he is the juggler. He is the jester who defies hatred.

Sadly, his gesture of peace is lost on both the police and the crowd. The rain of tear gas and debris continues.

Eventually, the water trucks arrive to disperse the crowd. As the demonstrators retreat, a lone individual remains. A rainbow arches towards him in the spray of water. For a moment, everything is still.

PIETER DE VOS

photos >> pf de vos

< a lone protestor sits in the spray of water trucks >



FTAA



< a protestor lies exhausted while a fire rages in the street behind him >



< a man gets medical attention after being hit by a rubber bullet (below) >



photos >> pf de vos

M

anifestation 2001



< a victim of tear gas >



< a couple dances in front of a police line >



< bras hang on the wall as a sign of protest >



< a fallen photographer >

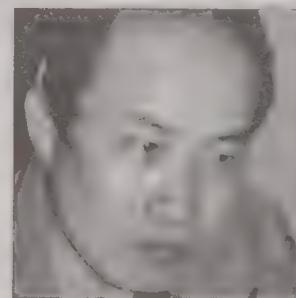
lost men from a lost war



vietnam vets find refuge in the inner city



Photo: www.painnetworks.com



The Vietnam War, known as the 10,000-day war, lasted from 1945 until 1975. The United States was involved from 1953 until two years before the war ended with the fall of Saigon.

Although the Vietnam War has been over for more than 25 years, there are many Vietnamese refugees living in the inner city. There are also men who enlisted in the US army to fight in Vietnam and others who came to Canada as draft dodgers to avoid becoming involved in a war they didn't believe in.

Mr. Fong hangs out at the mission drop-in nearly every night the door is open. It's one of the few places within easy wheelchair distance from his home at the PIN house a few doors south. Fong can sometimes even make it on foot, using walls for support. His breathing is laboured, loud and rasping. When he speaks, his voice has a flat, dead resonance. His body jerks and his hands shake.

When Fong enters the mission, people rearrange the chairs to accommodate his wheelchair. Ed, or "long skinny Ed" as the other residents at the mission know him, greets Fong when he comes in and hands him a cup of coffee, which Fong takes in shaking hands.

"Remember those nights in Dan Nag?" Ed asks. Fong's face lights up and he smiles.

"Maybe I shouldn't talk about such things in a mission," Ed apologizes, "But

that's probably one of his pleasanter memories of South Vietnam."

Ed goes on to explain Mr. Fong's condition. "He was a prisoner of the Viet Kong for two years. They tortured him. He'll never be the same again. It's a miracle that he survived."

The two men met only months ago, but Ed speaks from his personal experience, "I was a POW for three weeks. It was three

ammo belt over my shoulder and just went out shooting. I blasted a hole through enemy lines large enough for our company to get through. For that I got a Silver Star and two VC bullets for my efforts. They called me a hero but I was just doing my job."

Another time he was injured in the leg. He blacked out and then awoke alone in the jungle. Somehow, he managed to crawl the right way to get back to his unit.

Once back in Canada, Ed's drug habit lasted 20 years and grew to \$500 a day. Five years ago, he started the long road to freedom from drugs. Today, Ed says his only addiction is smoking. He's given up drinking and drugs. He's also got a good job, but the money scares him.

"It would be too easy to blow it now that things are going so well," he says.

He also faces seasonal depression. A widower, he still misses his late wife.

Christmas is an especially bad time, as is his wedding anniversary and the anniversary of her death. He has to keep himself busy, and living at the mission is one way to do it. Although he's not officially a volunteer, those who come in from the street appreciate his helpfulness and his smile.

"The other night someone called me Pastor," he says, "I kind of like the sound of that."

LINDA DUMONT

"He was a prisoner of the Viet Kong for two years. They tortured him. He'll never be the same again. It's a miracle that he survived."

weeks of hell. Then I was liberated when the army came through the town."

As a young man, Ed enlisted in the United States army and fought for two years in Vietnam. He returned with three Purple Hearts, a Silver Star and an addiction to heroin. Looking back, he says if he could erase those two years from his life, he would.

"I'm not that big, but over there I found out what it's like to be Rambo," he recalls. "One day I lost it. I took an M-16, slung an

poetry > >

they walk about...
dreams shattered...

<my sacred space>

My sacred space
Embraces me
Where ever I am
There it shall be
It is me
With all my pain
It is there
With all my love

My sacred space
Teaches me
To respect others
As it should be

My sacred space
Is Light
Burning bright
Dreams growing
Love sowing

It is heartache
And smiles
Heart gloomy
And Laughter
Flowing
It is me
Journeying
Through time
Learning and growing
Till I die
In my sacred space
That embraces me

LORETTA MISKENACK

<they>

They walk about
Dreams shattered
Hearts broken
Family forgotten
Day to day

They reach for the bottle
For solace
Companionship
Dreams forgotten
Oblivion

The bottle carries
Warmth
Laughter
A touch of comfort
Familiarity
Then oblivion

But in their souls
There is hurt
Anger
Fear and pain

So in their search
They roam the streets
Searching
Looking for what
A dime or two
Perhaps a quarter
That will add up
To another bottle

LORETTA MISKENACK



Photo: PE de Vos, Jr.

<cardboard box mansion>

it's past midnight
the streets are silent
the pavement is cold
no bro's in the alley ways

I walk a few blocks
no one around
where is everyone
from the circle of hard knocks

am I the only one left
roaming the streets, nowhere to go
I better find a place
to rest my weary bones

alas!, I recall
near the river bank
somewhere amongst the brush
stands a cardboard-box-mansion

with tired feet, I trudge slowly, slowly
as I near my abode I begin to hasten my pace
another few steps, one more night
in the safe haven of my cardboard-box-mansion

MARLENE MATCHATIS



the people's columnist

riding the rollercoaster

His street name is "Roach". He makes his home in a threefloor squat house, off Whyte Avenue, which he shares with 19 other youth squatters.

During the late afternoon he hits the streets, panning for change so he can help his street bros and sisters with enough change for a commune-style supper.

Roach is 23. Born in Red Deer, Alberta, he is the youngest of four brothers.

Life, if anything, for Roach has had its troubling times. Verbally and physically abused by his father, the turning point to early freedom finally arrived at age 14.

Roach's father went into a drunken

rage, lunging a knife into the hand of his terrified son. That would be the same day that Roach drew the line to stop the abuse he had experienced from the aggressive hands of his father.

That traumatic event forced Roach to leave his home in Brooks, Alberta. He hitchhiked to a safer haven, on the highroads towards the city of Vancouver. There he lived the life of a panhandler, on its many skid row streets.

In a nine year period, from the ages of 14 to 23, Roach lived the life of a street nomad, experiencing an array of problems in the many major centers of North America.

Roach has had a number of run-ins with the law. While panhandling, he's been arrested by the police. In his nine-year career as a panhandler, he's been repeatedly arrested, harassed, roughed up, and taken against his will, dragged into the many downtown back alleys and beaten severely by the men in blue.

Roach would like to eradicate the stigma that's associated with the common panhandler. He says, "When I'm out there panning for money, people ask me if it's going for drugs and liquor. That always gets my goat. I'm out there to survive, like most people."

JOHN ZAPANTIS



Photo: John Zapantis



help me rhonda!

i'm married to a drunk

dear rhonda

I'm married to a drunk. That's enough problem, so I don't need the added problem of everyone thinking I need to be told what to do about it. I just tell them to back off. If I want advice, I'll ask for it.

Also, you wouldn't believe the number of guys who come onto me offering to be next in line - it's pathetic. I'm married, and even if I weren't, I wouldn't be out looking for an instant replacement. Tell me, Rhonda, with all the women out there dying to find a man, how come I seem to have so many guys around when I already have one guy too many?

I'VE HAD ENOUGH

dear had enough

First of all, bees and flies love honey. When a woman has a "taken" look about her, she's more attractive to the opposite sex than one who has a "please take me" look.

Secondly, what's in this marriage for you? Safety? Financial security? Or is your husband a wonderful lover?

Thirdly, and equally important, is that you need support. Al-Anon is a non-judgmental,

non-denominational, non-advice-giving support group for relatives and friends of alcoholics. They're listed in the white pages of the phone book.

The only advice you need to hear is your own advice to yourself. Many of the men and women in Al-Anon choose to stay. It's a personal choice, and nobody's business but your own.

ALL THE BEST, RHONDA

have a question you can't answer or a problem you can't solve?

Write to Help Me Rhonda, c/o **Our Voice Magazine**. I'd love to help. Hope to hear from you soon! If you want my reply to your letter kept confidential, or you want your letter kept confidential, include a return mailing address.

free bikes

If bicycles are your business, it's a logical step to donate bicycles to those in need. Mark Rumsey, Manager of Hardcore Mountain Bike Store at 10008 - 82 Avenue has started a service to give away free used bikes to those who could use low cost transportation. The first bike was given away April 21st at the free supper put on by Strathcona Vineyard Church.

"I get a lot of requests for charitable donations," Rumsey said, "I couldn't respond to all of them, so I thought I'd do one thing, and bikes are something we do at the shop. We're small, but we can fix up one or two a week.

Before, when they got in quite a few used bikes, they would put them in the alley and the bikes disappeared overnight. Then they thought of people who could use them.

Sandy Jewitt, Marketing Consultant for Hardcore Bikes, said, "I think of guys like Victor and Churchill (two vendors he knows) who don't have bikes. It would give them more flexibility and other options they may not be able to afford." He also would like to share his love of biking.

Hardcore Mountain Bikes will accept donations of used bikes in reasonable shape. Before picking up a donated bike, they would like to look at it to see if it can be repaired. People who need free bikes will require a reference from a community agency.

LINDA DUMONT



c.o.m.

citizen of the month

mark sholz steve antle

Mark Sholz and Steve Antle, the wild and crazy guys from A-Channel's Big Breakfast Show, have a serious side: their dedication and commitment to the community.

The guys have a lot in common. They have been friends for fifteen years, they're both thirty-two-years old, single and from Nova Scotia; Mark from Halifax and Steve from Cape Breton. They were both hired at the same time to come to Edmonton and host the show.

Mark and Steve give many hours of their time to help organizations with fund raising: Big Brothers and Sisters, the CP, Cancer and MS Societies, the Salvation Army, CNIB and the Diabetes Society, to name a few.

Messages the guys have include: "Never give up! Finish what you start!" and "Help whenever and however you can, you never know when you might need help." Mark is also a public representative on the **Our Voice** Advisory Committee and both he and Steve are strong supporters of the magazine.

They deserve this recognition and are good role models in this city.

CEC GARFIN



Café Mosaics



Our Voice Magazine
and Café Mosaics'
Citizen of the Month

Every month in **Our Voice**, we will be featuring someone who has gone the extra kilometre in their life or in their career to make a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate. The **Citizen of the Month** will receive a dinner for two courtesy of the Garneau Café Mosaics on Whyte Avenue.

welfare to work programs: how do they affect participating families?

A group of researchers at the University of Alberta is doing a study about the impacts of recent welfare-to-work policies on families with pre-school children. A main goal of social policy reform across Canada is to move social assistance recipients into the workforce. This is commonly done by making it harder for people to get social assistance and by requiring recipients to take part in life skills, job training, and job placements. These kinds of initiatives are not new. What is new is that they are becoming increasingly mandatory. Almost all Canadian provinces and territories require that social assistance recipients take part in welfare-to-work programs in order to get financial and/or in-kind benefits. Social assistance benefits are either reduced or stopped if recipients do not look for jobs and/or take part in job-related programs. All social assistance programs in

Canada agree that some members of society, like single parents with young children, should not have to take part in welfare-to-work initiatives. But, the definition of young children varies a lot across provinces. British Columbia does not require single parents to take part in welfare-to-work initiatives until their children are seven years old. Alberta and Prince Edward Island require parents to begin moving back into the workforce once their children are six months old.

Little is known about the effects that welfare-to-work initiatives have for families in poverty. The study being done at the University of Alberta will provide information about the experiences that families with pre-school children have when they begin to move from social assistance to work. For the study the researchers are doing

three interviews with 20 to 25 Alberta families to chart what it is like for them over the course of a year as they begin to move from social assistance to work.

The study is important because it gives people who are "living" the welfare-to-work experience the chance to talk about it. The researchers will use the findings to develop recommendations to improve policies and programs for people in poverty. These recommendations will be of interest to agencies that provide services and supports to people in poverty and to policy makers whose responsibilities relate to poverty, welfare-to-work, and family well-being.

The researchers are looking for families with pre-school children who want to be interviewed. If you are interested in taking part, call Fiona Salkie, the project manager, at 492-1651.

SUPPORT OUR VOICE

Providing poor men and women with a chance to take control of their lives is the purpose of **Our Voice**. For six years now we have given opportunities to more than 1500 people in Edmonton who have found themselves living in poverty.

Our Voice, is a project of Bissell Centre, and was founded in 1994 to empower people who were homeless or at risk of becoming so, as they work toward gainful employment and self-sufficiency. With more than a six-year history, the **Our Voice** organization has gained notoriety for honest news reporting and our unique approach to addressing poverty.

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR VOICE!

Our Voice has come a long way but needs more to be done and we cannot do it without you. Your tax-deductible financial contribution will allow us to continue our commitment of helping the homeless/and the unemployed transition into gainful employment.

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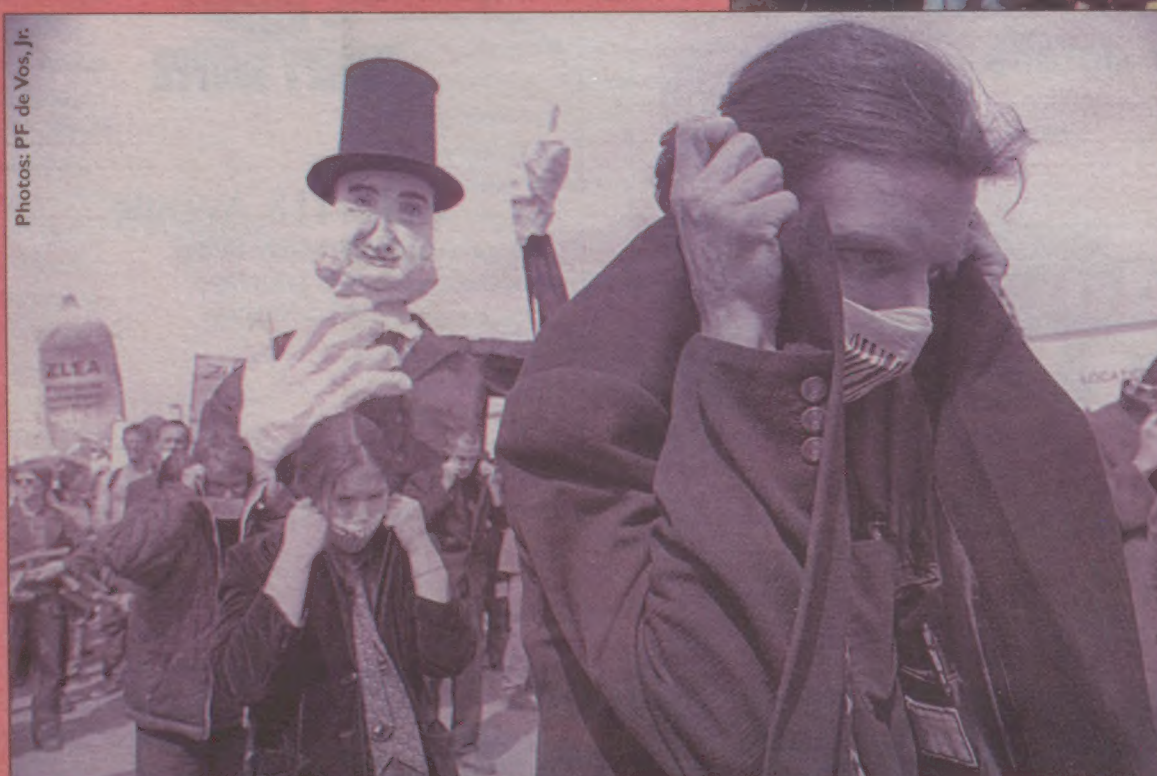


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